

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers February 1, 2005

NETS Feature

10th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit- There's still time to register

for the March 1-2, 2005, 10th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit taking place at the Sheraton Lansing Hotel in Lansing, Michigan. The summit is sponsored by the Michigan State Police, Office of Highway Safety Planning • Michigan Department of Transportation • Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission. For additional information regarding registration and conference agenda please refer to.... http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504---,00.html

Driver Training: Is it the Right Solution for Your Vehicle Crash Problem?

Each year employers spend nearly \$60 billion on employee crash-related costs. With the average on-the-job motor vehicle crash costing employers \$16,500, a dramatic spike in a company's crash rate is enough to make any manager stand up and take notice. The fact is that when employees drive for business purposes, companies put themselves at risk. To reduce the potential costs and risks associated with employees on the road, many businesses are turning to a driver-training program for protection.More: http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/2_1_05a.asp

Technology announcement made by General Motors

Motivated by recent crash data, General Motors Co. has announced plans to make two safety-oriented technologies—OnStar and stability control—standard on vehicles sold in the United States and Canada by 2010. Initial plans call for the OnStar telecommunication service to be standard on all GM vehicles by 2007 with a one-year service plan included in the vehicle's price. OnStar becomes standard on mid-sized and full-sized SUVs ordered after February 1st. Currently OnStar is standard on 32 models and available as an option on 25 others. Meanwhile, adding stability control, which has been praised among safety experts to prevent crashes, is expected to take a bit longer. The company cites the ability of suppliers to provide enough components as a factor in delaying the process. Read the release at <http://www.gm.com/company/onlygm/pressrelease.html>

Latest Traffic Safety News

Report: One in Four Traffic Crashes Result In Injury Claim

Trends in Auto Injury Claims, a new report by the Insurance Research Council is now available. The report outlines changes in traffic crashes and injury claim rates for the nation and each state from 1980 through 2003 under separate auto insurance coverage. The study also examines total injury claim costs for the country and each state from 1987 through 2001. According to the report, more than one in four traffic crashes results in an injury claim. Read the release at <http://www.ircweb.org/news/20050124.pdf>

Are Cell Phone Laws Effective?

Only the District of Columbia, New York, and New Jersey have passed legislation banning the use of hand-held cell phone use while driving, but many states are considering similar legislation. In light of the spate of crashes involving teen drivers, Maryland is considering such a law, and the Virginia Senate just approved a similar law banning young drivers from using cell phones. Since the passage

of cell phone laws, studies have suggested that both hands-free and hand-held cell phones are equally distracting. Meanwhile, officials in New York and the District both said it was too early to judge the effectiveness of the laws. Read the full article at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/national/18cell.html?oref=login>

Automakers Find Safety In Lane Departure Warning Systems

Automakers are switching gears when it comes to safety. As in-vehicle safety features reach an all time high, automakers are now redirecting their engineers toward technologies that can help prevent crashes altogether. Among the newest crash avoidance technologies to hit the market are lane departure warning systems. These systems alert drivers to impending dangers should the car stray out of its lane or off the road. The system relies on a miniature camera mounted near the interior rear-view mirror where it has a view of the road ahead and can detect lane markings. If the system determines that a vehicle is drifting out of its lane, a warning buzzer sounds and an icon of a car flashes on the dashboard panel. Read the full article at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/24/automobiles/24CARS.html?ex=1264395600&en=4ba62e75f5c81a74&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland>

GPS Proves Profitable For Many Companies

Once an expensive tool used by the military, a growing number of private companies are creating new and profitable uses for global positioning systems (GPS). Today GPS technology is being used to keep tabs on school buses, new teenage drivers, Alzheimer's patients, and philandering spouses. GPS uses a network of satellites that orbit the earth to pinpoint the location of things on the ground. Over the past year, the price of the technology has dropped making them affordable for mass consumption. Read the full article at

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050116/REPOSITORY/501160387/1013/NEWS03%20>

Study Evaluates Alcohol Impaired Driving Among U.S. Ethnic Groups

A new study reports nationwide survey data on alcohol and drug impaired driving among U.S. ethnic groups. The study found that drinkers most likely to drive while impaired by alcohol are more likely to be men, regardless of ethnicity, not married, they consume more alcohol, and are alcohol dependent, than drinkers who do not engage in alcohol-impaired driving. However, important ethnic specific predictors are also identified across the different ethnic groups. Based on the results, self-reported rates of DUI were highest among white males at 22 percent, Native American/Native Alaskan men at 20.8 percent, and men of mixed race at 22.5 percent.

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Author: R. Caetano McGrath

Company Looking To Launch Voice-Activated Car Stereo

An on-line music company is in the process of developing voice-recognition software that will help drivers maneuver through hard drive-based car music systems that hold thousands or even tens of thousands of songs. While the company is initially looking to markets in Japan, where it has had early success with dashboard music products, it will ultimately be available in larger markets. The development is part of a movement to make digital music easier to use while on the move in cars or with cell phones and other handheld devices. The company plans to have the technology ready by 2006. Read the full article at http://news.com.com/Car,+play+me+Eminems+latest+hit/2100-1027_3-5537405.html

Automakers Meet Consumers Demands For 'Infotainment' Technology

In-vehicle entertainment options have risen dramatically over the past decade with car-buyers looking for living room style amenities in the comfort of their cars. Automakers are meeting these demands by packing more electronic components than ever before. Referred to as "infotainment", the DVD player is among the most coveted electronic device. With the spread of mobile data and entertainment technology and falling prices, automakers are now able to offer navigation systems, wireless cell phone capabilities, and stereos that can digitally store songs. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0501/17/A01-61362.htm>

Maine Proposes Tougher Seat Belt Law

With one of the lowest seat belt usage rates in the country, Maine is proposing a stricter seat belt law that would make not wearing a seat belt a primary offense. The proposal would also increase the fine for not wearing a seat belt from \$50 to \$225. According to officials, if the state's seat belt usage increases to 80 percent as expected, it would save an estimated 14 lives, prevent 200 serious injuries, and save \$41 million each year. Read the full article at <http://pressherald.maine.com/news/state/050113seatbelts.shtml>

Report: Cars Are Lasting Longer, Median Age Nearly 9 Years

According to research conducted by R.L. Polk and Co., the median age of passenger cars grew to 8.9 years in 2004, an all time high. For trucks, the average age fell to 6.6 years due in large part to the record 9.8 million new trucks registered in 2004. Meanwhile 5.32 percent of vehicles were scrapped last year, making this the lowest rate since 1993. Read the release at http://www.polk.com/news/releases/2005_0118.asp

New Radiation Scans At Ports, Borders May Harm Drivers' Health

New security screening devices that use radiation to scan the contents of trucks and trailers at ports and border crossings may pose health risks to drivers, according to Teamsters union representatives. The equipment uses gamma rays, which emit low doses of radiation, to examine the contents of a truck or trailer. The union's initial understanding was that drivers would not be in the truck when it was being scanned, but that has not been the case. Still, a representative from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has said the level of exposure to drivers would be within safe limits. Meanwhile, the union is undergoing an investigation of the technology.

Police In Pennsylvania Will No Longer Identify Minors Involved In A Crash

After a review of the laws that pertain to juveniles, the Pennsylvania State Police will no longer release the identities of minors who are involved in traffic crashes. Information has been withheld for minors charged with most crimes and juvenile court records are sealed, unless the juvenile is prosecuted as an adult for the crime. However, police have generally identified licensed driver ages 16 to 18 and minor-aged passengers who were involved in traffic crashes. Now the police have determined that these identities are not public information under state law and have been instructed to withhold this information. Read the full article at <http://www.dailyitem.com/archive/2005/0112/local/stories/10local.htm>

Researchers Create New Road Sign Typeface For Aging Drivers

A Federal Highway Administration study predicted that by 2005, 20 percent of American drivers would be over 65, creating a major safety problem on the nation's roadways. One of the dangers is the affect age has on a driver's night vision, especially the ability to distinguish contrast and "halation," when letters lighted by headlights blur together. In an effort to make road signs more legible and recognizable for America's aging population, two researchers developed Clearview, a new typeface that thins out and opens up the interiors of the letters used on roadway signage. The current typeface

dates back to 1949 and came from the tradition of handmade signs. The new typeface has been proven to improve legibility and recognition by as much as a 20 percent. Read the full article at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/21/automobiles/21SIGN.html?ex=1264136400&en=3febedc5208931de&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland>

Web Sites To Tackle Aggressive Driving

In an effort to curb aggressive driving, law enforcement officials in Arizona and Washington are asking the public to use the World Wide Web and report reckless drivers on-line. Washington motorists can go to the state patrol's web site and click on a link to report roadways where aggressive driving is consistently a problem. They can note what kind of recklessness they have witnessed, when and how often the incidents occur, and the offender's license plate number. Using the information, police officials devise a strategy that might include using motorcycle teams, unmarked patrol cars and aircraft to target aggressive drivers in those areas. Meanwhile, in Arizona a similar, but privately owned and operated website is being launched by a Phoenix police lieutenant. For more information visit www.unsafedriver.com and www.safedrivinginstitute.com

Study Examines Impact Of Varying Verbal Interactions On Driving Task

Researchers at Clemson University recently conducted a study focusing on how different kinds of verbal interactions affected a driving related task. Utilizing two-person teams and a driver simulator, the study created a scenario in which one partner was the driver and the other an in-vehicle passenger. In another scenario, the researchers tried to create a cell phone situation, where one partner was the driver and the other was remotely located. The researchers found that teams interacted verbally at a slower rate during remote than during in-person interactions.

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: L. Gugerty, M. Rakauskas, and J. Brooks

TRB Release Circular Addressing Impaired Driving Countermeasures

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) has released "Electronic Circular 72: Implementing Impaired Driving Countermeasures: Putting Research into Action—A Symposium" summarizes an event that was held on August 21-23, 2003 in Irvine, California. The circular provides an overview of the information presented and discussion among the participants, as well as the background papers prepared for the Symposium. View the circular at <http://trb.org/publications/circulars/ec072.pdf>

Researchers Explore Aggressive Driving Triggers

Researchers at the University of Southern Mississippi investigated the potential contribution of sensation seeking, impulsiveness, and boredom to driving anger and the prediction of aggressive and risky driving behaviors. The findings provided additional support for the Driving Anger Scale in predicting unsafe driving behavior, as well as supported the use of multiple predictors in understanding unsafe driving behavior.

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: E.R. Dahlen, R.C. Martin, K. Ragan, and M.M. Kuhlman

News from USDOT

NHTSA Launches Super Bowl Mini-Planner

Super Bowl Sunday has become one of America's biggest national sporting events, as friends and families gather to watch the big game and enjoy the surrounding festivities. Yet, it is also one of the year's most dangerous days on the nation's highways, due to alcohol-related traffic crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed a "mini-planner," containing a press release, op-ed, fact sheet, pictures, posters and other items, to help you stop impaired driving at this time of year. The Super Bowl Mini-Planner has been posted on www.stopimpaireddriving.org

FMCSA To Propose New HOS Ruling

The U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) recently announced that it will reexamine the U.S. hours-of-service (HOS) rule and will issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for a new mandate. The agency will seek input from truck drivers, motor carriers, law enforcement officials, safety advocates and others on the HOS regulations. In July 2004, the U.S. Court of Appeals threw out the federal government's hours-of-service rule and sent it back to FMCSA for review because the agency failed to consider "the physical condition of the operators. The FMCSA has until September 30, 2005 to introduce a new HOS rule. Read the full article at <http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=3694>

New Study Finds Child Booster Seats Not Being Used

A new survey conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration revealed that only 40 percent of children aged 4 to 8 use car safety seats or booster seats, meaning that a majority of children risk being thrown from the car in the case of a crash. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of childhood death in the United States. Current state laws vary on when and how children should be in safety seats. Read the full article at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6868114/>

NHTSA Chief Expected To Continue His Service

Dr. Jeffrey Runge is expected to keep his post as the head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal government's agency responsible for reducing deaths, injuries, and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle crashes. During his second term, NHTSA is expected to address upgrading roof-strength standard, improving side-impact airbag protection, and reducing vehicle incompatibility in crashes. For more information visit <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19669-2005Jan19.html> and http://wardsauto.com/ar/auto_pending_issues_top/index.htm

USDOT: Safety Features Pay Off

According to a new report released by the U.S. Department of Transportation, seat belts, air bags, and safety features have saved 329,000 lives since 1960. The agency also evaluated child safety seats, energy-absorbing steering columns, improved roofs, and shatter-resistant windshields. The study also found that the number of lives saved annually from safety devices increased from 155 per year in 1960 to 25,000 per year in 2002. Additionally, the number of fatal crashes dropped for the first time in five years from 43,005 to 42,643 in 2003. At the height of these successes, the agency is shifting its focus from crash protection to crash avoidance with the use of advanced electronics and sensors that can warn drivers when they drift out of their lane, back into an object, or even fall asleep. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0501/19/C01-63841.htm>

Work-Life

Study Uncovers Strengths, Weaknesses Of Parent-Imposed Driving Rules

In an effort to find out what parents are doing to prepare their teen drivers, a recent study assessed the content, delivery rigidity, and consequences of 143 driving rules reported by 24 parent-teen partnerships. The results found that parents covered the full range of concerns including night driving and passenger limits, as well as a parent-teen agreement to impose consequences if the rules were violated. However, the study also found that many rules were not very strict and only half showed parent-teen agreement on content.

Source: Journal of Safety Research Authors: J.L. Hartos, T. Shattuck, B.G. Simons-Morton, and K.H. Beck

Baby Boomers Turned Empty Nesters Enter New Lifestyle With New Cars

As baby boomers move into the empty-nest demographic, they are taking on new directions in life, even when it comes to their car. Older consumers are turning to newer styles and features and instead of being interested in practicality; many are interested in choosing vehicles that preserve their youth. However, research indicates that these consumers are also interested in size, fuel economy, and safety features. They are also turning to new shopping methods. In 2003, more than 47 percent of buyers aged 60 and over used the Internet to research their last vehicle purchase. Read the full article at <http://www.aiada.org/article.asp?id=31556>

Study Examine Utah's Graduated Licensing System

A new study in Utah examined the effectiveness of its graduated driver licensing system by determining whether crash rates of 16-year-old drivers decreased after the system's implementation. Researchers studied statewide motor vehicle crash data and examined overall crash rates, nighttime crashes, crash severity indicators, seat belt usage, and licensure status. The study found that the overall crash rate per 1,000 licensed 16 year old drivers decreased by 5 percent and seat belt usage increased by 6.3 percent. Meanwhile, the nighttime crash rate remained unchanged and there was no correlation found between crash severity and graduated licensing.

Source: Annals of Emergency Medicine Authors: L.K. Hyde, L.J. Cook, S. Knight, and L.M. Olson

International Traffic Safety News:

Oil Companies, Automakers Join Forces To Reduce Crashes Abroad

Amid the World Health Organization's projection that traffic incidents will become the third leading cause of injury and disease by the year 2020, seven of the world's largest automakers and oil companies are joining forces to implement a five-year, \$10 million project to reduce traffic fatalities in developing countries. The new initiative will focus on pedestrian safety and seat belt use, the training of road safety professionals, and the provision of seed money to support pilot programs to improve road safety. The Global Road Safety Partnership is spearheading the initiative and is receiving support from General Motors, Shell, Ford, Honda, Michelin, Renault, and Toyota. For more information visit <http://www.grsroadsafety.org/>

'Road Safety On Four Continents' Conference Announced

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) is cosponsoring the Road Safety on Four Continents conference on October 5-7, 2005, in Warsaw, Poland. For additional information visit <http://www.vti.se/3907.epibrw>

Flexible Working Conditions Cut Traffic, Increase Employee Productivity

UK-wide research shows that employers who offer flexible and remote working practices are helping to reduce rising congestion levels. Research shows that nine out of 10 UK firms now employ such practices. One report found that 13 percent of Scottish Internet users would prefer to work from home, with experts saying that this alone could reduce congestion by about 5 percent. Experts also draw on evidence that proves flexible work schedules lead to gains in productivity and employee satisfaction. However, only eight percent of those surveyed said their employers would allow working from home. Read the full article at <http://business.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=92492005>

UK Survey: Lax License Checking Puts Companies At Risk

A recent survey conducted in the UK investigating fleet safety found serious flaws among employers and license checking. Approximately 80 percent of companies were found to have ineffective checks and up to 150,000 company motorists could have invalid driving licenses for driving private cars on company business. Meanwhile, there has been a significant increase in legislation that allows

companies to be prosecuted over a crash involving a vehicle driven by one of their employees. Another survey found that the level of awareness among company directors about the costs and risks associated posed by employees driving on company business is a 'worrying low.'

EU Proposes Advance-Warning Systems For Vehicles

The European Commission recently announced its proposal to allocate a radar frequency system that will allow cars fitted with the proper equipment to detect nearby objects and warn drivers to avoid them. The plan is set to be implemented in EU member states' national laws by mid-2005 and is expected to reduce the frequency and severity of rear-end collisions and prevent minor collisions while parking. The short-range radar system, which will be mounted on cars can detect objects within 20 meters, and will warn drivers ahead of time of a potential crash situation. Read the full article at <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6835149/>

Report Uncovers Drivers' Perceptions, Misconceptions Of Speeding

A new report reviewed the penalty rules of speeding and examines driver's perceptions of speed limit enforcement. The authors drew from a survey of 204 Norwegian drivers and found that on average drivers overestimated the fines for minor speeding offenses and underestimated the fines associated with serious speeding offenses. Drivers also overestimated the probability of being caught for speeding. The report also examined the relationship between driver characteristics and their knowledge of speeding enforcement policies. The study concluded that older drivers had less knowledge about the threshold level for serious speeding, but were more knowledgeable about the detection rate than younger drivers. Researchers also found another noteworthy conclusion; the number of times drivers were stopped due to speeding increased their knowledge of fines.

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: F. Jorgensen and H. Pedersen

UK Considers Ban On Speed Camera Detectors

The UK House of Commons is considering including a provision in its Road Safety bill that would outlaw speed camera warning devices, forcing half a million drivers to throw away their detectors. Demand for these in-car detectors has soared over the past two years as the number of speed cameras has risen to more than 5,000. If the provision passes, motoring organizations are arguing that owners should be compensated for the devices, which usually cost between £100 and £200. These same organizations also claim that there is a safety benefit to these devices providing drivers with a reminder to slow down and making them more aware of their speeds. Yet, Department of Transport officials say that the devices sometimes interfere with camera equipment and are used by "extreme speeders" to evade speed traps. Read the full article at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/01/17/nspeed17.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/01/17/ixnewstop.html>

Pope Urges Rome City Officials To Solve Traffic Problems

Pope John Paul II recently urged Rome's officials to try and solve the city's traffic jams and rush-hour bottlenecks. Although the Pope recognized that he lives and works in relatively traffic-free Vatican City, he is well aware of the traffic chaos that exists beyond his city's walls. The Pope's remarks came during his traditional meeting with Rome city leaders and regional and provincial administrations in which they exchange New Year's greetings and express hopes for the coming year. Read the full article at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0500213.htm>

Korea To Spend Millions To Alleviate Traffic Congestion

The Korean government is expected to spend over \$225 million U.S. dollars over the next five years to install various monitoring devices to provide traffic monitoring and an alert system for drivers. The goal is to reduce the country's serious traffic congestion by extending ITS solutions from major highways to smaller alternative roads throughout the country. Technology will be installed to track the average

speed of vehicles and travel time between designated road segments. In addition, variable message signs will provide traveler information and suggest alternative routes when congestion occurs.

Denmark Considers White Barriers The Safer Option To Traditional Gray

Denmark is currently experimenting with white concrete barriers, testing whether they can withstand the changeable Danish weather and if it is feasible to install them on roads with busy traffic. While white concrete emphasizes the Danish architecture, it also offers important traffic safety benefits, particularly in overcast and rainy conditions. When the traditional gray barrier became wet it took on an almost black appearance, whereas the white became luminous and reflected the light.

Study Evaluates Drowsiness Among Shift-Working Bus Drivers

A new Brazilian study evaluated daytime and nighttime sleep, as well as daytime and nighttime sleepiness of professional shift-working bus drivers. The study found that sleep length was shorter and sleep efficiency reduced during daytime sleep when compared with nighttime sleep. Thirty-eight percent of the drivers had indices of obstructive apnea and hypopnea syndrome during nighttime and daytime sleep, more drivers snored during daytime than nighttime sleep, and 38 percent of the drivers demonstrated periodic leg movements. It was also revealed that 42 and 38 percent of the bus drivers met the criteria for sleepiness when the test was conducted during the day and night, respectively. The daytime as compared to nighttime sleep of shift-working bus drivers was shorter and more fragmented and was associated in many with evidence of excessive sleepiness. Respiratory disorder was a common finding among the professional shift-working bus drivers. According to the researchers, these sleep deficiencies may adversely affect on the job driving performance.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine Authors: L.K. Barger, B.E. Cade, N.T. Ayas, J.W. Cronin, B. Rosner, F.E. Speizer, and C.A. Czeisler

With Help Of Cell Phones Canadian Firm Develops Traffic Tracking System

With the latest generation of cell phones that come equipped with Assisted Global Positioning System technology, an Ottawa firm is drawing on cell phones to design a mobile traffic network system. The system would employ a large number of cell phones to act as probes, determining how fast vehicles are moving along major thoroughfares and where congestion is occurring. The company plans to offer real-time updates to subscribing customers in order to help them navigate around problems on the road. The cell phones of these subscribers would act as the probes. Read the full article at <http://www.canada.com/vancouver/theprovince/news/driving/story.html?id=524b43a5-6f14-4f7d-bb0a-bad18e0f174b>

Poll Surveys Impact Of Sensitivity To Punishment, Reward Among Drivers

Researchers in Spain seeking to gain knowledge on punishment and reward programs for drivers developed "The Sensitivity to Punishment and Sensitivity Questionnaire" and distributed it to 792 frequent adult drivers. The study found that drivers with high scores in sensitivity to punishment and scores in sensitivity to reward were those that drove within the law. Consequently, those with low sensitivity to punishment and high sensitivity to reward were those drivers who broke the law more frequently.

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: J. Castella and J. Perez